
Conference on Disarmament

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Note verbale dated 6 February 2026 from the United States Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament

The Delegation of the United States of America to the Conference on Disarmament has the honor to share the remarks of the Honorable Thomas DiNanno, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, delivered in the Conference on Disarmament on February 6, 2026. The U.S. delegation kindly requests that these documents be circulated to the Member States and recorded as an official document of the 2026 session of the Conference on Disarmament.



Annex to the note verbale dated 6 February 2026 from the United States Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament

Statement by U.S. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, the Honorable Thomas DiNanno to the Conference on Disarmament on February 6, 2026

As delivered

Good morning colleagues. Thank you for hosting me today and for accommodating the schedule change. Thank you to Chargé Baasankhuu for Mongolia's leadership of this year's CD.

Today marks the end of one era of arms control and hopefully the beginning of a new one.

As of yesterday, February 5th, New START and its central limits have expired. The treaty allowed for a one-time, 5-year extension which was enacted in 2021. The treaty could not legally be further extended. I am here to tell you that President Trump wants to find a better agreement.

Even if we could have legally extended the treaty, it would not have been beneficial for the United States – or the world – to do so. New START was signed in 2010 and its limits on warheads and launchers are no longer relevant in 2026 when one nuclear power is expanding its arsenal at a scale and pace not seen in over half a century and another continues to maintain and develop a vast range of nuclear systems unconstrained by New START's terms. An arms control architecture designed nearly two decades ago for New START does not allow the United States to credibly uphold both our strategic deterrence commitments to the American people and our extended deterrence commitments to our allies.

President Trump has been clear: the power of nuclear weapons is too immense and the cost of their use too great. He has repeatedly expressed his desire to see a world with fewer nuclear weapons.

That is why I am here today, at the Conference on Disarmament; to preview how the United States believes this next era of strategic stability and arms control can be realized and how we can fulfill President Trump's vision of a world safer from, in his words, "the single greatest threat to the world."

There are three major themes that I would like to discuss: the history of how we got here; the present – the change in the strategic environment; and, the future – how we aim to improve upon New START in order to achieve a new, better strategic stability and arms control architecture that makes the world safer and more secure.

When New START was signed in 2010, the Russian Federation and the United States maintained the largest nuclear weapons stockpiles in the world. We still do – despite China undergoing a massive and deliberate buildup, as it pursues a nuclear arsenal close to that of the United States and Russia. This buildup is opaque and unconstrained by any arms control limitations. This is the crux of the problem and is emblematic of the change in the global strategic environment over the last 15 years. Today, the United States faces threats from multiple nuclear powers. In short, a bilateral treaty with only one nuclear power is simply inappropriate in 2026 and going forward.

To understand the current place the United States finds itself in, we need to revisit the past. New START reflected the geostrategic landscape of the time, and some of its elements were useful. Data exchanges and on-site inspections contributed to some level of verification that provided for open channels between states parties and an equilibrium in deployed strategic systems and warheads. Despite these positive attributes, the shortcomings of New START placed unilateral constraints on the United States that were unacceptable.

In 1961, Fred Iklé famously postulated in *Foreign Affairs* that, "What counts when arms control violations are detected are the political and military consequences of those

violations since this alone will determine whether or not the violator stands to gain in the end.”

President Trump withdrew from the INF and Open Skies treaties in his first administration because Russian violations created an intolerable disadvantage for the United States. Today, unconstrained by the one-way agreements, the United States just a few short years later addressed the unilateral constraints of INF. And today, U.S. INF treaty-range systems near deployment.

Among New START’s many shortcomings, there is one that merits a discussion in more detail. In 1991, former President Bush announced a series of reductions in tactical or theater-ranged nuclear weapons systems and stockpiles. Thousands of nuclear warheads and missiles were removed from U.S. stockpiles and destroyed. In response, Soviet President Gorbachev announced reciprocal measures that were later reinforced by President Yeltsin in 1992. Known as the “Presidential Nuclear Initiatives” or PNIs, these were political – and therefore not legally binding – commitments.

As has been the case in many other arms control agreements, we had one side that earnestly abided by its commitments under PNI, and one side that disregarded its commitments. The result was that between 1992 and today, Russia not only failed to remove or destroy its theater-ranged systems, it modernized and expanded those nuclear forces. American New START negotiators recognized this but were unable to secure an agreement on these weapons. When the agreement was presented for ratification, the United States Senate *insisted* that the administration seek a follow-on agreement to address this very issue. This seemingly small detail seems to have been lost in almost all discussions around New START but is neither obscure nor inane. Its implications were and remain profoundly significant and expose the fundamental flaw of the treaty. Simply put, tactical- or theater-ranged nuclear weapons were not covered by New START. And the Russian stockpile numbers in the thousands.

Successive U.S. administrations, tried to address this issue, but failed to achieve the goal of bringing non-strategic nuclear weapons under the arms control umbrella. This led to the most glaring shortfall in the New START model. Some 34 years later the same intolerable disadvantage exists between U.S. and Russian tactical nuclear weapons. Almost all of the U.S. deployed nuclear forces were subject to New START while only a fraction of Russia’s much larger stockpile was. I should add that exactly zero Chinese nuclear weapons were covered by New START. And as we sit here today, China’s entire nuclear arsenal has no limits, no transparency, no declarations, and no controls.

This is more than just a numbers game. Outside the 2010 arms control architecture, Russia’s development of novel nuclear systems further threatens global strategic stability. In 2018, Moscow announced the development of several novel nuclear-capable strategic systems such as its nuclear-powered Skyfall cruise missile and its doomsday Poseidon torpedo. New START constrained neither of these systems and Russia has successfully tested both within the last few months. You all may recall the recent news that Russia has begun developing a system that would allow it to put a nuclear weapon in Earth’s orbit to use as an anti-satellite weapon. Not only would this weapon have fallen outside of New START limits, but it would also violate the Outer Space Treaty if ever deployed. Such a system - capable of indiscriminately disrupting civilian space assets - would pose significant risks to the entire world.

And last but not least, where the P5 once shared a stance against the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program, which is growing in size and sophistication, Moscow has now allied with Pyongyang and described its nuclear program as a “closed issue.”

The inadequacies of the unilateral constraints imposed on the United States under New START are most critically compounded by the emergence of a third major nuclear weapons power. China has said that its nuclear policy has been the most consistent in the world. That *may* have been true in the past, but is not true today. In 2010, as the United States and Russia agreed to limits in its strategic arsenals to historic lows, Beijing had a relatively small nuclear arsenal, consistent with its approach to deterrence since the earliest days of China’s nuclear program. Since then, China used the opportunity of legally binding U.S.-

Russian restraint to begin expanding its arsenal at a historic pace, posing a new threat to strategic stability and the global nonproliferation regime.

Concerns existed in the President Trump's first administration that China might seek to double the size of its arsenal. Not long after the extension of New START in 2021, China's three new ICBM silo fields became front page news worldwide. Even now, after years of public evidence and calls for transparency from many countries here in the CD and elsewhere, China continues to deny the evidence of these sites and the extent of its nuclear weapons buildup. China remains on track to have over 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030, and Russia is supporting this build-up by helping China develop the weapons-grade fissile material necessary for its expansion.

We are clear eyed and realistic about the speed, scale, and quality of China's historic military buildup. As stated in the National Defense Strategy, we will deter China in the Indo-Pacific through strength, not confrontation, with the understanding that peace is possible, on terms favorable to Americans and acceptable to the Chinese. But China refuses to contribute to disarmament objectives we are all here to advance. China's release of an Arms Control White Paper is insufficient. Its actions do not demonstrate its commitment to nuclear arms control and disarmament. It would be irresponsible and short-sighted to extend limits with the Russian Federation bi-laterally and not account for these realities.

No longer constrained by the political-military circumstances of 2010 and the treaty they yielded, and in response to the destabilizing behavior of these other countries, the United States can now finally take steps, consistent with our National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, to strengthen deterrence on behalf of the American people and our allies. Militarily, the expiration of New START enables the United States to take parallel steps. We will complete our ongoing nuclear modernization programs that were initiated while New START entered into force. The United States also retains non-deployed nuclear capacity that can be used to address the emerging security environment, if directed by the President. Such actions include expanding current forces, diversifying our capabilities, developing and fielding new theater-ranged nuclear forces, and adapting our extended deterrence posture as necessary.

I'd now like to address an issue where another disparity exists. Last Fall, President Trump instructed the Pentagon to start testing our nuclear weapons "on an equal basis." Specifically, the President was referring to Russian and Chinese nuclear testing in violation of their respective moratoria on yield-producing nuclear tests. Since the President's statement, we have received many questions about what he meant by "an equal basis." The annual U.S. compliance report has previously assessed that Russia has failed to maintain its testing moratorium by conducting supercritical nuclear weapons tests.

Today, I can reveal that the U.S. Government is aware that China has conducted nuclear explosive tests, including preparing for tests with designated yields in the hundreds of tons. The PLA sought to conceal testing by obfuscating the nuclear explosions because it recognized these tests violate test ban commitments. China has used decoupling – a method to decrease the effectiveness of seismic monitoring – to hide their activities from the world. China conducted one such yield producing nuclear test on June 22 of 2020.

This confluence of factors – serial Russian violations, growth of worldwide stockpiles, and flaws in New START's design and implementation – gives the United States a clear imperative to call for a new architecture that addresses the threats of today, not those of a bygone era. This means taking into account all Russian nuclear weapons, both novel and existing strategic systems, and addressing the breakout growth of Chinese nuclear weapons stockpiles.

As I stated earlier, the United States will continue to pursue responsible pathways to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world, consistent with President Trump's vision and our obligation under the NPT, through both bilateral and multilateral venues. Together, we can prevent an unmitigated nuclear arms race, limit the build-up of nuclear arms, restore responsible behavior when it comes to nuclear testing, and, as appropriate, address issues concerning non-NPT nuclear weapons possessing states.

While a treaty limiting nuclear weapons can come only from negotiation among sovereign nuclear weapon states, such an arrangement has implications for the security of all states. We hope CD member states will rise to the challenge and use the 2026 CD session to advance this effort.

As throughout our history, the United States has maintained a willingness to seek strategic stability and arms control arrangements that are verifiable, enforceable, and contribute to the security of the United States and her allies. What we are proposing is not talks for the sake of talks—with this effort, the United States is looking for meaningful progress based in concrete actions.

As we pursue new dialogue and new formats, we won't stand idly by in the face of threats to the United States and our allies. The United States will maintain a robust, credible, and modernized nuclear deterrent to ensure our security preserves peace and stability, and negotiate from a position of strength. In doing so, we will prevent anyone from being able to dominate us or our allies so that all nations recognize their interests are best served through peace and restraint. A question for us gathered here today will be how much deterrence is enough. We believe the answer to that question will depend, on part, on the success of upcoming multilateral strategic stability discussions. We must act now to strengthen global security and lead the world towards verifiable nuclear weapons reductions.

February 5, 2026, indeed marks the end of an era: the end of U.S. unilateral restraint. The next era of arms control can and should continue with clear focus, but it will require the participation of more than just Russia at the negotiating table. We cannot promise that this process will be quick or easy. Achieving outcomes of value rarely are. But we remain committed to securing a strong outcome and will not accept one that falls short of our standards, nor will we stay silent on noncompliance. We will achieve President Trump's vision for a new, improved, and modernized nuclear weapons treaty that lasts long into the future.

I yield back to the Chargé. Thank you.
